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Neglected Arabia

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Neglected Arabia

Missionary
News and Letters

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY
The Arabian Mission



GOVERNMENT OFFICE, KATIF, WHERE DR. AND MRS. ZWEMER LODGED.

NUMBER SEVENTY-NINE

OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 1911

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The Arabian Mission.

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NEGLECTED ARABIA.

October - December, 1911.

The Bible in Oman.

To the man that has faith in the word of God, the province of Oman presents a unique and urgent opportunity. In the first place, it is a Mohammedan land. The work among Mohammedans has been, in time past, largely the work of Bible Societies, and the same is still true. But Oman is more than one among many Mohammedan provinces. Probably nowhere in Arabia are the people as faithful in their observance of prayers, and the other ordinances and rules of Islam. But these same Moslems are friendly to the "Injeel," as they call the Gospel, and many of them willing to buy and read it. They are able to read it, too. As an estimate, probably one-half of the people can read and write, and in some of the places actually more of the women than the men. Such a condition constitutes a very rare opportunity among Moslems. I doubt if it can be duplicated in all Islam.

The land is still virgin soil. The infidelity of the West has not reached it. It knows nothing of the false Christianity of Rome, and little of the scandals of European society in the East. This condition will not last, and that very fact adds to the urgency of our present opportunity.

The people live in villages. Naturally they will not come to us, so we must go to them. Any single distributing point must of necessity be most inadequate, but the tactful colporteur, inland, is able to sow the Word widely.

This year it was my privilege to go on a three months' tour. Thanks to the many years of preparatory work there was almost no hostility, no shut doors. We met uniform cordiality, and that for Doctor and colporteur as well. Some 1,200 copies, or portions, of Scripture were sold (some few of these presented as gifts to Sheikhs, etc.). The tour was much of it in untouched places and revealed great opportunities. In one such city we sold 200 copies and portions. A judge came and bought a copy of each of the Gospels. He bought



AMARA BIBLE SHOP—COLPORTEUR IN DOORWAY.

some of the books of the Old Testament, as well, The people as a whole are very fond of Genesis, Job, The Psalms and Proverbs. They will often buy these when they refuse the Gospels. One woman asked for a copy of Ruth, which led the colporteur to remark that if Ruth and Esther were available as one portion, they would meet with quite a demand in Oman.

Sometimes there are difficulties. One teacher objected that the books lacked the orthodox Moslem introduction, "In the Name of God The Compassionate, The Merciful." Another teacher came in from a neighboring village, and insisting that the Koran had abrogated all previous Sacred books, he kept our sales in that village down to seven copies. But the colporteur argued him well off his feet, and then covered up his defeat for him by presenting him with a volume of poetry, and asking him to read to the people. Later in the day we went to that teacher's village, with him, and sold fifty portions in perhaps three hours. He stood by approvingly.

There is "much land to be possessed in Oman, still. A large part

of that country has never seen missionary or colporteur, or even a Christian of any sort. While the doors are open and the field clear, it behooves us to make haste that no part of the field be left unsown. Islam may be like a rock," but "Is not my Word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

P. W. HARRISON.



Present Conditions in Busrah.

Much has been said about the New Turkey, and about the regeneration effected by the present régime of constitutional liberty. None is more anxious to see all hopes realized and claims substantiated than the missionary, and in returning to Busrah after an absence of several years I have been vitally interested in noting the changes that have taken place in that time.

There is no question but that recent years have been a period of material progress in this corner of the Ottoman Empire. One only needs to see the long line of ocean steamers at anchor in the river to be sure of this. The new Government buildings would indicate the same; and more than this, that the increased income from taxes and customs did not, as formerly, mostly remain in the pockets of the gatherer. An extensive condemning of property for the widening and straightening of streets may seem drastic to the Arab, but it speaks of civic pride and ambition in some one. That a few of these ambitious have seemingly gone beyond the bounds of wisdom, does not prevent us from applauding the evidences of a developing and not decadent civilization.

Has there been a growth in morals as well? Yes, in some directions. Bribery, for example, is not as universally recognized as a necessary factor in business as formerly. The prohibition of it among Government servants is well enforced, and has made life for us foreigners much easier in several directions. On the other hand these evils which make Christian cities a reproach not only to ourselves but to all the world are growing far faster than any influence for good, and the open evidences of the existence of drinking and social evil should compel the Moslem apologist to qualify these arguments for the superiority of Islam.

To the credit of the present régime it should be said that the value of learning as well to the state as the individual, is recognized as never before. I vividly remember in the olden days our futile efforts to open a school, and how even the most unpretentious of efforts—the

teaching of English to a group of higher class young men in the home of one of them, was stopped by the local Government. Now schools seem to be springing up on all sides, and the boy who wishes a substantial elementary education has the choice of half a dozen institutions, all authorized and encouraged by the Government.

As regards religious liberty one may easily see what has happened, but it requires much boldness to speak assuredly of the future. Conditions now are greatly changed for the better. For example, a few weeks ago a fairly large consignment of controversial religious literature from an Egyptian press brought up in the custom house. Some of the books if found a half dozen years ago would have, and indeed have meant imprisonment for the holder. Now they were weighed *en masse* for the usual duty, and seemingly aroused only a casual question if these were the kind of books we Protestants were bringing into the country! We have not yet had occasion to test how far this official tolerance would protect an open and bold convert from Islam to Christianity, but most of us believe that in the face of any religious or political crisis it would count for very little. A few days ago a popular demonstration was made to strengthen the hands of the Girl in the Cretan matter. But it was a *holy war* that was talked of by an excited populace, and men who wore neither fez nor turban were wise if they kept off the streets. We are sincerely grateful for all the wide open doors before us, but it behooves us to hasten and enter in before they are shut.

Personally one has the utmost sympathy and admiration for the devoted men who are giving time and strength and means to purify and strengthen the political fabric of their country—for those whose aspirations take them courageously upon the thorny paths trodden by our fathers. And gladly would one help in every effort for righteousness, justice and liberty. And yet one is constrained to feel that there are immense odds against them. The absolute indifference of the vast uneducated classes, the inbred, inherited suspicion of the Christians and Jews, the antipathy of those Moslems whose sect is not the dominant one—are a dead weight upon all progress. And always there is the doubt, that as no stream can rise higher than its source, so no Mohammedan state can permanently occupy a higher level than that which for centuries has been accepted as taught by the Koran, and which we see exemplified in all the past history of Islam.

What about the present personal attitude of the individuals we meet in Busrah from day to day? Have political changes made them more receptive of the Gospel, more willing to turn from Mohammed to Christ? I have seen no evidences of it. To turn to a parable of our Lord,—the beaten path seems harder than ever and the birds of

evil more vigilant. The thorns grow more luxuriantly, and the stony soil is more in evidence. *But* our hope is, that as we have more of the good seed at our command, and undoubtedly can go much further afield in our sowing, so we soon will see a more abundant harvest on that *good ground* which is being prepared even now by the Spirit of God.

JAMES CANTINE.



The Church Missionary Society at Bagdad and Mosul.

[A Message from our sister Mission to the north.]

These two cities are both built on the Tigris, in the Arabic speaking part of the Turkish Empire, often called Turkish Arabia. The former numbers about 200,000, the latter 30,000 inhabitants, by far the great majority of whom are Moslems.

The C. M. S. Mission in Bagdad was opened more than thirty years ago, and the medical mission is its chief strength. It has suffered much from the death or retirement of missionaries; as, in view of the great needs of the place, there is always the temptation to overwork, especially in the medical staff, and this, with the great heat of summer, usually results in a breakdown. The city of Bagdad is so well known that it needs no description.

At present the mission consists of Dr. and Mrs. Johnson, Dr. Stanley, Dr. Eleanor Hill, Nurse Anderton and Rev. E. Boyes, who joined it in February last. It is weak on the evangelistic side, as none of the above mentioned has been long enough in the country to gain proficiency in the language, except Dr. and Mrs. Johnson, and satisfactory native helpers are hard to find. A piece of land has recently been purchased for the building of a hospital and dwelling houses for the medical workers, which will be proceeded with as soon as money can be collected. The present conditions under which the work is carried on are most unwholesome. A native house in a very narrow street, closely surrounded by other buildings, badly ventilated and ill-adapted to the needs of both patients and workers, causes a great strain on the strength and energy of all concerned.

The hot season lasts six months, and owing to the position of the city and the want of facilities for travel, it is impossible to get away during the heat to any cooler place. The usual plan of vacation is to go out in camp towards the end of September when the heat is abating, somewhere on the banks of the river.

There is also a good boys' school of about eighty pupils carried on by the mission, and a small Protestant congregation.

Mosul, situated on the bank of the Tigris opposite the ancient city of Nineveh, has a somewhat better climate than Bagdad. The hot season is not so long, and it is possible to take refuge in the Kurdish mountains from the fierce heat of summer. However, this implies a fatiguing journey of three days under very trying conditions of travel. On the banks of the river we may watch the making and loading of rafts supported in the water by inflated skins, an invention the origin of which is lost in the mists of antiquity. A journey to Bagdad on one of these rafts may take five days or fifteen, for the raft is at the mercy of the wind and current, so a good supply of food is necessary.



KURDS FROM MOUNTAINS NEAR MOSUL.

Mission work at Mosul was taken up by the C. M. S. eleven years ago, on the retirement of the American Congregationalists, and comprises a medical mission and day schools for boys and girls. The Book Shop, which is in one of the busiest streets, is in charge of a tall man between sixty and seventy years of age, in flowing Eastern raiment, who seems a combination of Mr. Steadfast and Mr. Valiant-for-the-Truth in *Pilgrim's Progress*. All those who come to the Shop, Arabs, Turks, Kurds, or Nestorians, are greeted in their own tongue, and books are offered them in their particular language. Often Moslems come to the shop, not to *buy*, but *read* a Christian book, (especially

the Scriptures) in peace away from the prying eyes and suspicious glances of their own households. As education increases the number of readers, the press is becoming a power in this country, and we ought to make more use of it for the spread of Christian literature. Our chief sources of supply are the mission presses in Cairo and Beirut, and if God gives the means, we should like to have a reading-room and lending library, as the shop is too small to accommodate many visitors. Formerly we dared not distribute tracts openly, but with the new régime in Turkey things are changed, and there is now no hindrance to the diffusion of Christian literature. Pray for the work-



MOSLEM SCHOOLGIRLS, MOSUL.

ers who distribute and for those who read. May God bless the seed sown, that it may bring forth fruit an hundredfold.

The medical mission is unfortunately closed owing to the absence of any English doctor. The boys' school also needs to be strongly reinforced, and the present primary school not only enlarged, but a high school also opened. As all classes are now seeking education, an opportunity is offered which may never occur again, as if we fail to open good Christian schools, their place is sure to be taken by those of an anti-Christian tendency.

The girls' school numbers a hundred and fifty to two hundred pupils, of whom one-third are Moslems. It is well up to the present

educational needs of the female population, and has the advantage of thorough, well-trained Christian teachers. The great need is for workers, both native and foreign, well grounded in the essentials of Christianity, steadfast in allegiance to Christ, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

E. M. MARTIN.



A Visit to Katif.

Beyond Bahrein, with the mission houses, the hospital and the school, the mainland of Arabia stretches westward for eight hundred



HOUSE OF HAJI MANSOOR PASHA, KATIF.

miles across the province of Hassa, lower Nejd and Hejaz to the Red Sea. All the way from Bahrein to Jiddah there is no witness for the Gospel. Bahrein is the gateway to East Arabia, even as Jiddah is to the west, and to go from here into the interior there are two routes, one by way of Ojeir, the miserable landing place of the caravans for Hofhoof, and the other northwards to Katif, which lies fifty miles across this part of the Persian Gulf from Menamah Harbor.

On Monday, April 24, Mrs. Zwemer and I left Bahrein in a sailing boat, with Ibrahim and Salih as joint captains, to visit Katif once more. Our last visit together was fourteen years ago, when we met with rebuff and were practically prisoners of the Turks, who were filled with suspicion and prevented any sort of open evangelization.

On this occasion, although we went with some fear and trembling lest we should again be turned back, we were surprised to find the doors wide open, partly due to the change of the Turkish Government, yet more particularly, we believe, because of the visit of Dr. Worrall two years ago. Even when we were still on the boat the sailors spoke of "Dr. Mission," their jolly passenger whom they had carried over, and who had made a name for himself and for the Mission at this gulf port. Twelve hours' sailing with a not very favorable wind, and twelve hours more tossed at anchor during the night, brought us to Katif on Tuesday afternoon.

Katif has no good name among Hassa Arabs; its location is low and marshy; its inhabitants are mostly weak in frame, sallow in complexion, and suffer continually from malaria. The town itself is badly built, woefully filthy, damp and ill-favored in climate. Yet it has a good population and brisk trade. The inhabitants are mostly Shiahs of Persian origin and are held in abhorrence by the Wahabis and the Turks as little better than infidels. The present location of Katif corresponds to the very ancient settlement of the Gerrhs of the Greek geographers, but no exploration for ruins has ever been made.

The town first gained its importance as the capital of the Carmathians in A. D. 287. Abu Tahar al Karmoot from his capital at Katif carried on devastating wars throughout two-thirds of Arabia, held the caliph a prisoner at Bagdad, menaced Aleppo, and filled the precincts of the Kaaba and the well of Zem Zem with Mohammedan corpses. This was the sect that carried away the Black Stone in triumph all the way across Arabia to Katif, and attempted to set up a rival shrine there. It was afterwards carried back, washed in rose water and restored to its position; and when the Carmathian sect broke up, the whole region around Katif and Hassa for a long time remained estranged from Islam—in the words of Palgrave, "a heap of moral and religious ruins of Carmathian and esoteric doctrines." The Wahabi invasion and the attempt of these stern Puritans, at the beginning of the last century, to make all Moslems orthodox did not restore the former glory of Katif. The whole region went from bad to worse.

When the Wahabi revival died down the Turks came and took Katif in 1871. They are still endeavoring to subject the Bedouin tribes, and only three and a half years ago the town was besieged by the Arabs and nearly lost to the Turks. Everything today looks very different from the villages of Bahrein, where safety and good government have made commercial progress possible. Everything in the town wears a mouldy look. The water supply is plentiful, bursting out in hot springs which water the gardens for nearly thirty miles along its coast; but the water is full of germs and worms, and the people in

consequence suffer many of the chronic diseases due to their uncleanly habits. Only the ruling classes and a few merchants are orthodox Moslems.

We landed from our boat, going through the surf on donkeys, and carried our letters of introduction to Shakir Effendi, who bore the lofty title of "Amir el Bahr" (Lord of the Sea). No trouble was made in regard to our passports nor the character of our errand, and in a little room set apart as our lodging, none too large and yet clean and airy, we received thrice daily the dole of rice and stew, supplemented by our own lunch basket.

The four days of our visit were crowded for Mrs. Zwemer by a ministry of healing to the multitude of sick. Some of them were old patients from the hospital, who had returned home, and others had heard through them and came to our lodging or besought us to visit their houses. Ahmad (the colporteur) and I sold Scriptures in the bazaar, talked with the soldiers, answered questions on present day politics, and exchanged opinions regarding the Yemen rebellion with Turkish officials. I was surprised to notice the demand for Scriptures, and we sold out our stock very soon. The effect of the work at the hospital, and especially of Dr. Worrall's visit, has greatly disarmed former prejudice, and the people were to a degree friendly and unsuspicuous.

The West has invaded the East, even at Katif. Every night, and even in the early morning, our host tried to entertain us with a Victor phonograph grinding out *café chanté* selections from Cairo, while the machine, for lack of a table, rested on an old case of the Standard Oil Company. The rifles carried by the soldiers were made at Springfield, Mass., and the one rusty cannon which defended the entrance to the old castle was doubtless made in Germany.

On April 27 the town had a holiday. The custom house and the serai were decorated with palm branches and illuminated at night, for it was the Sultan's accession day. As representing all the foreign governments of the world, I took part in the proceedings, and heard the address given by the Kadhi from Stamboul, in which he asserted again and again, as though it were a matter of doubt, that the present Sultan was caliph of all the Moslems, and that his kingdom would have no end until the day of judgment. The soldiers received one cigarette apiece and a drink of lime sherbet in view of the occasion. The whole performance reminded us of how Americans would try to observe Christmas on a desert island, and was a pathetic apology for the new régime at the outskirts of the Ottoman Empire. It will be a long time before Katif draws on the treasury for harbor improvements or education.

The following day we paid a visit to the castle and village of Anaj, where the colonel and his family extended the best of hospitality. Katif with its surrounding villages may have a population of perhaps twenty thousand. The following are the most important places: Darain, Tarut, Senabis, Eth Thania, Anaj, Shehad, Safwa, Karoodija and El Amair. The cavaran route to Hassa from Katif is not safe, nor is there much intercourse with the interior westward or north, but the population is too large to be permanently neglected, and affords an open door to all the villages of this coast. In recent years steamers have begun to carry cargo from Busrah and Bahrein to Katif at uncertain intervals, and the trade of the place seems to be on the increase. Will you not join us in prayer that the seed sown here may spring up and bear fruit, and that these people, too, in their miserable surroundings, physical and spiritual, may know something of the law and liberty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

S. M. ZWEMER.



Life at Zobair.

The question is sometimes asked, does touring pay? My experiences this past year may help give the answer.

About twelve miles southwest from Busrah we find the typical desert town of Zobair, which can be reached, if the roads are in good condition, within two hours, at other times it may take five hours and more; it all depends with whom and at what season one travels. The road goes through uninteresting desert land, a part of an old crumbling mosque whose leaning tower threatens to fall any day and a coffee shop opposite the same are the only landmarks on the journey. Having passed these the city itself becomes visible, stretching from east to west. The one large unsymmetrical tower, like a parallel to Islam, indicates where the main Mosque is situated. Many unpretentious ones exist almost in every street, for Zobair is famous for its orthodoxy, and many Moslems look upon the people of Zobair as especially pious; some go there to gain spiritual footing. The town used to be governed by one big Sheikh whose mansions cannot be mistaken. One sees at the first look that they belong to a man of rank, but, unfortunately, he has absorbed all the vices of the civilized world and lost his dignity and the respect of the citizens; thus it happens that each one is at present his own master. Only when friendly tribes visit the place the Sheikh is expected to entertain them, any affairs which need arbitration or prompt decision have to be brought before the Mudir of the place; if he is unable to give satisfaction to the parties he refers them to the court in Busrah. Zobair has about

10,000 inhabitants who live in prison-like houses. A look from the roof puts one in mind that one is looking upon endless forts built of sand, without any foundation, upon sand. Our Lord's parable repeats itself very often here, for during the winter rains no less than sixty houses fell, and when I asked if anyone was killed in the accident I was assured that not a soul was lost "Only women."—Zobairies are almost all Nedjdie either direct or from their forefathers. They speak with great pride about Nedjd, especially that they will allow soldiers



STREET SCENE IN ZOBAIR.

(Turkish) and Jews to enter the place, but Christians, never, it would make the noble city unclean. These people are most careful to keep the eyes of neighbors or strangers from their inclosures and the women have to suffer more than in any other place I have seen yet from this seclusion. Although wealthy and more refined than most Moslem women they are compelled to die of their ailments or cruel treatment from native quacks, on account of this absurd strict confinement, which some of the bigotted ones count virtue. Almost all of the men are merchants, landowners or mullahs, all true, dignified Arabs in clean flowing

robes and brilliant headgear. One recognizes immediately that these people have traveled and that they have been in contact with the civilized world. For the silks of their garments for themselves and their families are from India, carefully chosen. Their manners as well show of experiences with cultured people, although they would not for the world have their wives and daughters know what they see in Bombay, for which I have been often grateful, because every English or European person is classed with the Christians by them. I was not a little surprised to receive one day an Arab gentleman who wished to talk with me about New York. After I asked him from where he had his knowledge of that city he began to tell me in fluent English that he had visited America. On another occasion a heavily veiled woman who would not for the longest time show me her face nor tell me her name, being afraid that I might give her away that she had left her house during the day, addressed me in broken English. She had for a time enjoyed freedom in Bombay, her husband being a pearl merchant, who used to take her along, but now she is again kept in strictest confinement besides growing blind although a young woman, and that on account of having no permission to go to Busrah to see a doctor. I could tell much of the miseries of the Moslem women but we are all already acquainted with the sadness of their lives. The problem is how can we win and help them. The only way is to make real, trusting friends of them and show our deepest sympathy for their lonely, empty lives and let them see how we enjoy our lives, to stimulate their longing for something better. This can only be accomplished by our living among them. I love nothing better than to go touring, for these women wait for our visits.

Touring is not as some think, a visit for a day. It means a thorough rounding up of a place where one gathers or scatters, and with the missionary it is almost always the latter. I have been asked in a horrified tone, "You don't mean you live and eat with the dirty Arabs?" Yes, a great many times the missionaries do and nearly always when the tourist is the only Christian soul in a Moslem town, because one has to invite all means to gain the confidence of the people. Further, either their friendliness or suspicion will not permit them to leave a stranger in their midst to be long alone. Does it pay? I give the following, to let the reader form the answer: Three years ago I just went for a short trip to reconnoitre the place. Fortunately the driver took me to the Sheikh's house and put me under his care. In spite of the armed men who were ordered to protect me on the street, I had a mob howling around me. Two years ago the people of Zobair remembered gratefully the medicines I had dealt out to them the previous year in the Sheikh's house and treated me very friendly the month I spent among

them, where I found many opportunities to talk to them on religious subjects. This year I had a chance to stay nearly three months with them. Medical work was given the second place. Religious talks and readings were invited on both sides. Mainly the harems of the rich took great interest in what was read to them so that some began to read the Gospel and one to study the Bible to convince herself of the prophecies. How their confidence and trust in us have grown shows in the fact that mothers wished to give me their children to bring them up Christians. I could not comply with their intentions on account of the fathers whom I wished to be consulted about it, although one bright little girl of about seven years old was sent along with me, whose week day dream is to go Sundays to church, and she disdains to go back to her former surroundings. I hope she will be the nucleus for the girls' school in Busrah.

Looking into the future Zobair will be one of the railroad stations and will link Kuwait and Busrah together. Besides the caravan road from Nasareah and many inland tribes terminate there, it is only a question of a few years more that also the women of Zobair will enjoy a greater freedom, civilization, and travel will enter with the railroad, and as we hope to see a Girls' Boarding School erected in Busrah the people of Zobair will have the best opportunity to send their daughters the short way, always in their parents' reach. When we have gained that step Kuwait will follow in the same way.

MARTHA VOGEL.



Arab Home Life.

Home life has such sacred and holy memories that to us it can only be associated with the highest virtues and the purest morals. Without them, it is no more home life. Home life associates one's thoughts immediately with a place where peace and love reign. Father, mother, or children are bound together by these holy ties. If either, father, mother, or children have left their home, the circle is broken. Home life is no more complete. Our Christian home spells "Union and Unity." The Arab home spells "Division and Separation."

Upon visiting an Arab home the first thing we notice after getting inside the dead, windowless walls, is division. A special place, the harem, is reserved for the women. No matter how much luxury we find in the harem, we may be certain that it is inferior to the men's quarter. The most comfortable rooms in the house can be occupied by the women and their visitors only when the men have left the house. Modern luxuries, such as chairs, are found in the men's *mejlis*; and

as one woman told me, when the men do not want furniture any longer because it is damaged, it is then given to the women!

However, we find the harem well furnished with Persian rugs, the walls decked with mirrors, large and small, with here and there a Koran text. On the floor there is an assortment of pillows to recline on.

Housekeeping is not very strenuous for Arab women. Nearly every rich home has a certain number of slaves. The meals do not consist of many courses. Our readers are no doubt familiar with the Arab custom of sitting around one dish, and all eating from the same with the right hand. This custom certainly saves a lot of dishes and dishwashing and polishing of knives, forks and silverware.

But here also we find division, at least in large households. The men are served first, and the women eat after they have finished and not in the men's presence. One woman told us she would not even dare drink a glass of water in the presence of her husband. She was from a high class home. But another woman told me that she always eats with her husband if he is the only man in the house and she the only woman. The latter is a woman of the poorer class. The middle and poorer classes seem to me more content than the higher and wealthier. They have more freedom. It is also more difficult for a poor man to have several wives, or to have slaves. Therefore his wife will be called upon to do her own work, which surely cannot be a hindrance to contentment.

In the rich home the slaves do all the work,—cooking, washing, sweeping, caring for the children, carrying the water from the well, etc. So the Arab lady in a wealthy home has very little work to do. The soft and graceful hands testify to this. They spend their time in sleeping, eating, sitting around to talk and entertain.

Among my limited number of acquaintances about three per cent. can read the Koran, but according to their own statements, they read very seldom. About the same percentage do good needlework and spend a great part of their time sewing. Many of the women busy themselves with *telul-work*. This work when finished is a kind of gold braid used on their garments as anklets or sleeve cuffs. The work is done on a pillow, and they use from four to forty or more bobbins, making a succession of half-strokes with gold thread, fastened with ordinary cotton thread. I have seen about six different designs, but very likely there are more.

When it comes to a plain, straight seam their sewing does not amount to very much. But they work a peculiar kind of embroidery stitches that may be compared to our buttonhole stitch, and others to our plain chain-stitch. They embroider the most artistic designs on

their garments with both gold and silk thread, and I have often wondered at the beauty of this work.

These are some of the ways in which our Arab sisters busy themselves within their blank walls. Industrial work, I believe, might have a chance among the girls in Arabia; their hands seem to be adapted for art embroidery and lace making. If girls could be taught a trade by which they would be able to earn their own living and help their mothers financially, the evils of child marriage and divorce might be lessened, and this would mean one step towards a happy home life.

Few Arab women I have met seem happy. When one visits them at first, they often appear content; they will entertain cheerfully and are always hospitable. It is sometimes only after a series of visits, and after they are convinced of the sincerity of our friendship and love for them, that they have confidence enough to unburden their hearts. As one of them said last week, "Over us hangs a heavy sword continually, and we do not know when it will drop suddenly upon us." They live in constant fear.

The other day during my visit in a house where I call weekly, a wife of a high class Arab came in to make her call. After the usual formal greetings, she began an eager and fluent conversation with the hostess. Expressions of anger, scorn, mockery and laughter succeeded each other very rapidly on the faces of the women who were listening. The hostess was anxious to find out what I thought about the matter; I had to admit that I only understood part of it. She then turned to the speaker and asked her to take off her veil that I might understand her better, and to tell me her story. "These people," said the hostess, referring to the missionaries, "always do the right thing; they are better than we are; ask her what you should do." So she turned to me and said: "It is just this way: I am my husband's first wife. I have three sons and one daughter. The latter is married. All my children are grown up. Since my marriage my husband has married three other wives. He brought them all into our house, and I have trained them all in household duties and taught them how to sew. You see each of them was young and knew nothing when she married. I cared for their children, and I was the head of the harem. Now my husband is sick, and he says 'I do not care for you any more. When I get better I am going to marry another. You are divorced and will have to go.' You see our book allows a man only four wives, and if he marries another he will have to divorce one. All his wives I have trained to do the work well; my sons are big and I am old, and of course I am the one he needs the least now. Do you not think it would be best if he should die? He told me to send for the doctor. I refused and told him to die." I let her finish her long story, and then tried to

give her the advice she asked by showing her the wrong attitude she was taking to gain her point, and did my best to tell her that in God's sight she was the only lawful wife and that it was her duty to care for her husband while ill. I told her how love and devotion are expressed in time of illness in our homes. She seemed to think it impossible that this high degree of love could exist between a father and mother.

Is it true, as many claim, that these women are happy because of their ignorance? Is it true that plural wives live with each other and love each other as sisters, as others hold? All that I have seen so far and information that I have gained from other missionaries and from the women themselves, deny this idea most emphatically.

Not until God has revealed the Christ to Moslems will all these evils disappear and womanhood be lifted up; not until then will our Arabian sisters know what home life can be, and what God wants it to be.

Even those whose lives do not directly touch Arab home life, because far removed, can pray with us the prayer of the Lucknow Conference: "O God, to Whom the Moslem world bows five times daily, have pity upon them and reveal to them Thy Christ."

JOSEPHINE E. SPAETH.



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